

Highest Blessings Part 1



Sunday Dhamma Talks *Volume* 4

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith

*President of National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand
Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām*



Sunday Dhamma Talks

Volume 4

by

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith

Interviews on
The National Broadcasting System of Thailand

January - June 2009

Published by

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām

Damnoen Saduak District, Rajburi Province 70130, Thailand

Recognized Excellence

- Rajburi: Provincial Meditation Institute & Provincial Pali Studies Center;
- Sangha Ecclesiastical Region 15 Academic Services Unit for Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (Covering four central provinces)
- National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand
- Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute, Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University
- Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy

1st Edition December 2009

ISBN : 978-974-235-683-1

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Venerable Chao Khun Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni
Luang Phor Sodh Candasaro

We dedicate this book and any merit it may generate, along with all our efforts at Wat Luang Phor Sodh – The beautiful campus, the Abbot’s teachings, Phra Mahā Cetiya Somdej, the International Retreats, the Thai Retreats, and the 24-hour Meditation Vihāra – to our beloved

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction	1
2. <i>Highest Blessings 01:</i> Avoid Fools <i>04 January 2009</i>	7
3. <i>Highest Blessings 02:</i> A Conducive Environment, Merit and Right Course <i>01 February 2009</i>	17
4. <i>Highest Blessings 03:</i> Expertise, Discipline and Pleasant Speech <i>01 March 2009</i>	25
5. <i>Highest Blessings 04:</i> Caring for Parents, Spouse and Children and Faultless Work <i>05 April 2009</i>	33

6. <i>Highest Blessings 05:</i> Generosity, Virtuous Conduct, Helping Relatives and Blameless Actions <i>03 May 2009</i>	41
7. <i>Highest Blessings 06:</i> Avoid Evil, Intoxicants and Carelessness <i>07 June 2009</i>	49
8. Summary and Conclusion	67

Appendices

A. Author: Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith	74
B. Venerable Chao Khun Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni	78
C. Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām	83
D. The Buddhist Meditation Institute	97

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to the National Broadcasting System of Thailand for making these Sunday Dhamma Talks possible. May their valiant efforts continue to prosper with the efficacy of the merit accumulated from this Dhamma propagation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro for serving as interviewer during these broadcasts and as the editor of this volume. May he also share in reaping the benefits of any merit generated.

Finally, let me also express my deep gratitude to Phra Mahā Prasert Paññāsetṭho and Phra Natpakanan Guṇaṅkaro of the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Publication's Office, to Phra Mahā Somchat and the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Audio-Visual Staff, to Phra Watcharapol Thirajitto for photography, as well as to my faithful Secretary Phra Mahā Chainipoj for their indispensable support in making this endeavor successful.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith
 Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām
 President of National Coordination Center of Provincial
 Meditation Institutes of Thailand

INTRODUCTION

“Happy Day!” I’m Phra Bart – Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro – from the United States. In BE 2550 (CE 2007) the National Broadcasting System of Thailand invited Venerable Chao Khun Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith to initiate a series of Sunday Dhamma Talks in English each month. I served as interviewer and am the editor of this volume.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith is one of Thailand’s most eminent meditation masters, Buddhist scholars, and educators, with an extremely impressive record well recognized from local through international levels. He is the National Coordinator of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand, Director of the Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy, and Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām.

Sunday Dhamma Talks

This is the fourth issue in a continuing series. Volume One began with an overview of Lord Buddha’s teach-

ings and continued through the first of the Three Higher Trainings (*Trisikkhā*) which is Morality (*Sīla*). Volume Two completed the Higher Trainings with Concentration (*Samadha*) and Insight (*Vipassanā*) Meditation and then focused on Lord Buddha’s instructions on meditation in the “Greater Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness” (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*). Volume Three expanded on fundamentals – morality or “Do Good!” – selfless generosity, loving kindness and compassion, expressed through Right Thought, Intentions Speech, Action, and Livelihood.

Volume Four

This Volume begins the series on Life’s Highest Blessings as presented in the Maṅgala Sutta. It is one of the most popular of all Buddhist teachings because it outlines concisely and constructively thirty-eight of life’s most important lessons in ten profound verses. The issue arose as a discussion among angels as to what were the greatest lucky signs or “Fortunate Omens.” The discussion swelled to higher and higher levels of heaven. Finally, Celestial King Sakka advised that only Lord Buddha could resolve this issue. Thus, a high-level heavenly messenger came down to Jeta’s Grove, near Sāvathī, and posed the question in verse. Lord Buddha responded in verse with the Maṅgala Sutta.

The genius of his response was in recognizing that good fortune derives not from good luck, but from appro-

priate behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, the translation of the Sutta as “blessings” reflects the way the question was asked more than Lord Buddha’s reinterpretation and sound lessons on beneficial behavior. Current Pāli and Thai dictionaries, which have been influenced by these teachings, define the word “Maṅgala” to mean “causes of progress or success or rejoicing.”

Here is the question as posed by the celestial messenger.

<i>Bahū devā Manussā ca</i>	Many angels and men
<i>Maṅgalāni acintayum</i>	Have pondered auspicious omens
<i>Ākaṅkhamānā sothānam</i>	Wishing for blessings.
<i>Brūhi maṅgalamuttamam</i>	Please tell us the most auspicious signs.

This Volume Four presents the first six verses of responses, which list 20 lessons for life. They are highly prized because Lord Buddha often taught specifically for monks, but these are worldly Dhamma appropriate for all.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith

Now, I would like to introduce Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith for those who are not yet familiar with him.

He is the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province, Thailand. His mission is to stimulate Buddhism, placing equal emphasis on academic study and meditation practice.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith has been broadcasting, lecturing and publishing about Buddhism since 1970 and toured universities in the United States for four years, before the press of responsibilities at home became too demanding. In 1986 he ordained as a monk with the name Sermchai Jayamanggalo. In 1998 he received the Royal Ecclesiastical Rank of Phra Bhavana Visutthikhun and in 2004 he was awarded the rank of Phra Rajyanvisith.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith has been the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām, which he founded and built since 1991 and has led the temple to become a recognized center of excellence in meditation practice, Pāli language, scripture studies, and Buddhist management. The temple conducts or coordinates training locally for Rajburi Province, regionally for Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and Ecclesiastical Region 15 (the four central provinces), nationally for the Thai National Office of Buddhism, and internationally for the World Buddhist University.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith has published over 70 books, 400 articles, and two journals, and recorded over 1,000

Dhamma lectures. In 2007 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in Buddhist Principles of Management from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and in 2009 he received a second honorary Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from Mahamagut University. In 2008 he was elected National Coordinator of the Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand and in 2009 he was appointed Director of the Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy.

In sum, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith has an extremely impressive record which has been widely recognized. You will find that the broadcasts compiled here go far beyond the ordinary in both scholastic erudition and inspiration for meditation practice. This is an exceptional union of academic and transcendental knowledge, rarely available in English. Please take full advantage of it.

*Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro,
Interviewer and Editor*





Highest Blessings 01

**AVOID FOOLS, SEEK THE WISE,
HONOR THE WORTHY**

04 January 2009

Good morning all. Happy New Year to each and every one of you. We are here for another Sunday morning Dhamma Talk with Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, the venerable Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province in Thailand. I am your interviewer, Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro, from the United States.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith is one of Thailand's most widely renowned Meditation Masters and Buddhist Scholars, dedicated to energizing Buddhism with equal emphasis on scripture study and meditation practice. He has led Wat Luang Phor Sodh to become a recognized center of excellence at the Provincial, Regional, National and Global levels. The

Wat now serves as the National Coordination Center for Provincial Meditation Institutes throughout Thailand. Internationally, it also serves as an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University.

Question 1: Welcome, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. This is our 19th Sunday Dhamma Talk, starting a whole new year. Last time, we discussed “Future Development,” examining the fruitful harvests eventually forthcoming from meritorious actions, speech and intentions in the present. Today we will begin an entirely new series on “Highest Blessings” that will last well into the new year. First, however, could you please review briefly what we covered last time.

Answer 1: Good morning and Happy New Year, ladies and gentlemen. Good actions in the present lead to future rebirth into happy worlds. Bad actions lead to rebirth in suffering worlds. Beyond this, Lord Buddha cited four current virtues that promote future spiritual welfare. They are: being endowed with (1) Faith (*Saddhā*), (2) Morality (*Sīla*), (3) Generosity (*Cāga*) and (4) Wisdom (*Paññā*).

Faith requires knowing whom and what to believe. We should esteem those with good conduct or proper actions, speech and intentions based on Morality, Concentration and Wisdom. The Right beliefs to hold determinedly are those which clearly lead to beneficial results, such as Lord Buddha’s teachings. Firm faith in good people and right

teachings act like a lamp lighting the way to a peacefully happy life with success and prosperity, drawing ever closer to the ultimate fruit of Nirvana or *Nibbāna*.

Moral behavior (*Sīla*), following the Five Precepts, protects us from violating others and their life, property, spouse, or reputation. It also protects us from violating ourselves and causing ourselves disaster. We avoid bad occupations, actions, speech and intentions and foster positive ways of living by staying always acutely alert and mindful every minute of every day. Good intentions lead to peaceful, orderly speech and actions and ultimately culminate in Transcendence and Insight.

Generosity or sacrifice (*Cāga*) is, first, *Amisadāna*, donating one's property to help others live happily and gain release from suffering. Second, it can be sharing ultimately correct advice or teachings (*Dhammadāna*) to help others practice Right Occupation, Right Action and Right Speech. Third, the supreme sacrifice is offering forgiveness (*Abhayadāna*) with loving kindness and compassion to help others release themselves from bad conduct and develop the Right Wisdom and Right Practice to get rid of passions and cravings

Finally, Right Wisdom (*Paññā*) stemming from *Vipassanā* insight will lead in the future to release from the causes of suffering. So, in conclusion, these four vir-

tues – being endowed with Faith, Moral conduct, Generosity, and Right Wisdom – light the way to future spiritual development and ultimate attainment of the fruit of Nirvana.

Question 2: Now, let us turn to “Highest Blessings.” What exactly is meant by “Highest Blessings,” and how did this issue arise?

Answer 2: Today we begin to study Lord Buddha’s Maṅgala Sutta, which is usually translated as the Discourse on Life’s Highest Blessings. It is one of the most popular of all Buddhist teachings, because it outlines concisely and constructively thirty-eight of life’s most important lessons in ten profound verses.

The issue arose as a discussion among angels as to what were the greatest lucky signs or “Fortunate Omens.” The discussion swelled to higher and higher levels of heaven. Finally, Celestial King Sakka advised that only Lord Buddha could resolve this issue. Thus, a high-level heavenly messenger came down to Jeta’s Grove, near Sāvattḥī, and posed the question in verse. Lord Buddha responded in verse with the Maṅgala Sutta.

The genius of his response was in recognizing that good fortune derives not from good luck, but from appropriate behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of

Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, the translation of the sutta as “blessings” reflects the way the question was asked more than Lord Buddha’s reinterpretation and sound lessons on beneficial behavior. Current Pāli and Thai dictionaries, which have been influenced by these teachings, define the word “Maṅgala” to mean “causes of progress or success or rejoicing”.

Here is the question as posed by the celestial messenger.

<i>Bahū devā manussā ca</i>	Many angels and men
<i>Maṅgalāni acintayum</i>	Have pondered auspicious omens
<i>Ākaṅkhamānā sothānaṃ</i>	Wishing for blessings.
<i>Brūhi maṅgalamuttamaṃ</i>	Please tell us the most auspicious signs.

Question 3: Thank you, Venerable Sir. Now, which of these lessons will we study today?

Answer 3: Today, we shall take the first of the ten verses. The verse is four lines, containing three teachings and the refrain, as follows.

<i>Asevanā ca bālānaṃ,</i>	Avoid fools,
<i>Paṇḍitānañca sevanā,</i>	Seek the wise,

Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ Honor the worthy.

Etammaṅgalamuttamaṃ This is most auspicious
(meaning most beneficial).

Question 4: Avoid fools, Seek the wise, and honor the worthy. Why is the advice to avoid fools so important?

Answer 4: The advice is literally to avoid associating with fools. The word “to associate with” means to get close to, to be intimate with, to share ideas with, to sponsor each other or to lead life together. It does not include just knowing each other casually in society. The word “fools” includes both those who wander uselessly, not knowing right and wrong, and those who behave overtly wickedly based on erroneous beliefs. Lord Buddha advises avoiding both because they lead their lives without Right Wisdom. Thus, the fool continually chooses wrong action, wrong speech and wrong livelihood, based on wrong intentions. As the Dhammapada says, mind precedes all:

Mind precedes all mental states.
Mind is their chief, they are all
mind-wrought. If with an impure
mind one speaks or acts, suffering
follows one like the wheel that fol-
lows the foot of the ox.

Mind precedes all mental states.
Mind is their chief, they are all mind
wrought. If with a pure mind one
speaks or acts, happiness follows
one like one's never-departing shadow.

Any person with wrong intentions will repeatedly undertake inappropriate actions, speech and occupational initiatives which will inevitably result in difficulties, problems, misfortune, or suffering – either great or small – affecting both the fool and associates.

Fools exhibit three kinds of seriously wrong actions in their daily lives and occupations: First, intentionally killing living beings, second, stealing, cheating or practicing corruption, and third, sexual adultery. Fools also display four kinds of improper speech: first, telling lies; second, rude, abusive speech; third, agitation to break up group unity, and fourth, damaging speech such as wrong advice or gossip. Mentally, fools reveal intentions based on the three root passions: greed, hatred, and delusion. Finally, fools are often characterized by taking intoxicants such as alcohol and drugs which dull moral restraint and lead to integrated sensual excesses often termed the Road to Ruin or Highway to Hell. Because of their wrong actions, speech and thoughts, fools meet with continual obstacles and problems. Dangers

and accidents are always imminent. These difficulties will engulf both the fools and their associates.

Thus, Lord Buddha advises us to avoid fools. In a previous lifetime, as an austere hermit named Akitta, He was offered the granting of any wish by Celestial King Sakka. He wished:

Oh, Sakka, I do not want to see a fool. I do not want to hear the speech of a fool. I do not want to associate with a fool. I do not want to speak with a fool. A fool can lead one to do evil deeds. A fool becomes angry even though others speak kindly to him. Nobody can guess his attitude. He observes no precepts. There is no auspiciousness in seeing a fool.

May I see the wise. May I hear the speech of the wise. May I associate with the wise. May I be pleased with the wise. A wise man can lead to welfare. He will never urge one to do an evil deed. Everybody can guess his attitude easily, He can easily understand the reasoning of others. I want to associate with such a wise man because he will observe the precepts.

Question 5: What about Lord Buddha's advice to seek out the wise?

Answer 5: None of the problems cited above afflict the wise. Puṇḍits (the wise) know right or wrong and observe precepts. They never do anything wrong, always thinking, speaking and acting advantageously, and always give only good advice. Thus, they and their associates lead peacefully happy lives free from problems, dangers and disasters. This can be considered a supreme blessing.

In leading our own lives, we must look for the Puṇḍit within as well as Puṇḍits outside. We must be always extremely mindful and alert and careful to control our own foolish or wicked impulses.

Question 6: Finally, please explain the advice to honor the worthy.

Answer 6: The word used here is “Pūja” meaning to revere. This advice means to honor those who deserve such reverence because they have attained transcendence or enlightenment. This means Arahants who teach the Right Path to peacefully happy life. Lord Buddha notes elsewhere that the proper way to honor such teachers is not just with ceremony or good offerings such as flowers, candles and joss sticks, but by appreciating and following their teachings and examples. It is the Three Gems which especially deserve such reverence.

So, in conclusion, Lord Buddha has taught us to avoid fools, seek out the wise, and honor the worthy. This is most auspicious.

Question 7: Thank you, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. You have taught us a lot. Now, I would like to ask you to lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 61.]

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We reverently appreciate your superb meditation instruction.



Highest Blessings 02

**CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT,
MERIT, RIGHT COURSE**

01 February 2009

Question 1: Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, we bid you welcome. This is our 20th Sunday Dhamma Talk. Last time, we began the new year by initiating a series on “Highest Blessings” that will continue for several months. Could you please start, today, by reviewing briefly what we covered last time.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Our current series studies Lord Buddha’s Maṅgala Sutta, which is usually translated as the Discourse on Life’s Highest Blessings. It is one of the most popular Buddhist teachings because it outlines concisely and constructively thirty-eight of life’s most important lessons in ten profound verses.

Angels were debating the luckiest signs or most fortunate omens and a heavenly messenger posed this question to Lord Buddha in verse. He responded with the Maṅgala Sutta. The genius of his response was in recognizing that good fortune derives not from good luck, but from appropriate behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious.

Last time, we discussed the first verse, which says: “To avoid fools, seek out the wise, and honor the worthy – this is most auspicious.” The word “fools” includes both those who wander uselessly, not knowing right and wrong, and those who behave overtly wickedly based on erroneous beliefs. Such fools choose wrong actions, wrong speech and wrong livelihood, stemming from wrong intentions. They can drag their associates with them down the Road to Ruin or Highway to Hell, continually encountering obstacles, problems, dangers and accidents. Avoiding fools and seeking out the wise, one should also honor worthy Arahants and the triple gems by appreciating and following their teachings and examples.

Question 2: Thank you, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, what will we study today?

Answer 2: Today we shall continue with the second verse. It is four lines, containing three teachings and the refrain, as follows.

<i>Paṭirūpadesavāso ca</i>	To live in a conducive environment,
<i>Pubbe ca katapuññatā</i>	To have merit from the past, and
<i>Atta sammā paṇidhi ca</i>	To set oneself on the right course,
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamaṃ</i>	This is most auspicious.

The first line is “to live in a conducive environment.” The word “environment” can mean world, country, region, neighborhood, company, organization or family. “Conductive” or “suitable” means a good place to stay where one can lead a peacefully happy life with prosperity. Specifically, this means a place where Lord Buddha’s teachings and principles of good practice are available, so that one can learn to lead a good life.

This means, first, refraining from bad conduct such as killing, stealing, committing adultery, lying or cheating, and addiction to intoxicants. Second, it means doing good, such as showing generosity, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Third, it means purifying the mind from the Five Hindrances, which are laziness, doubt, ill will, restlessness, and sensual desire. This is done in meditation practice by developing the Four *Jhāna* or States of Absorption. Purifying the mind leads to the Right Wisdom to know what is right and what is wrong conduct.

A good environment implies upright people such as respectable family and colleagues who practice virtuous moral conduct in accordance with the principles of *Sīla*. It also includes high-quality infrastructure facilities for communications and travel such as good roads, airports, telephone and internet. In addition, a good environment should include decent government, with fair laws and upright enforcement of the law. For example, a good illustration would be a Thai community with good government and a pure democratic system ruling in accordance with a properly formulated constitution in which national sovereignty rests with the whole population headed by the King. Most narrowly defined, a good environment implies an immediate family with Right Wisdom who understand and practice Dhamma.

Question 3: Thank you very much, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, could you please explain the second line of the verse which says that to have merit from the past is most auspicious.

Answer 3: This teaching indicates the influence that meritorious actions performed in the past will have in the present. This can refer to either results from previous lifetimes or from earlier years in the same existence. These factors produce results along with one's current efforts to purge harmful behavior and foster good intentions and conduct.

Suppose, for example, that a farmer had planted coconut palms when he was young and took good care of them over the years. These trees would continue to bear fruit and provide support for him at the present time, in his old age. Similarly, meritorious acts carried out in a previous lifetime can continue to bear fruit in this existence. There are ten Perfections or *Paramī* that carry results from one lifetime to the next. They are:

1. *Dāna Pāramī* or generosity,
2. *Sīla Pāramī* or morality,
3. *Nekkhamma Pāramī* or renunciation,
4. *Paññā Pāramī* or wisdom,
5. *Viriya Pāramī* or diligence,
6. *Khanti Pāramī* or forbearance,
7. *Sacca Pāramī* or truthfulness,
8. *Adhiṭṭhāna Pāramī* or resolution,
9. *Mettā Pāramī* or loving kindness, and
10. *Upekkhā Pāramī* or equanimity.

The implied lesson is that one must be ever mindful to practice meritorious Right Thought, Right Speech, and Right Action at all times in order to accumulate factors of perfection over successive lifetimes. Such diligence will produce good results both in the present existence and in future lifetimes, leading to security, peacefully happy living, prosperity, and eventually, to release from suffering.

Question 4: Thank you again, Reverend Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, for your very enlightening explanation. Finally, what can you tell us about the third component of this teaching – that to set oneself on the right course is most auspicious.

Answer 4: This lesson highlights the need for wise goal-setting and vigilant care from moment to moment throughout one’s present lifetime to live in accordance with natural law so as to enjoy a peacefully happy life. Lord Buddha summarized His principles for this most succinctly as “Avoid evil, Do good and Purify the mind.” One must remain constantly alert to get rid of hindrances and develop the Right Wisdom to recognize what is good and what is bad in every situation, every moment of this present lifetime.

In brief, one must practice *Dāna* or generosity and *Sīla* or morality in accordance with the precepts appropriate to one’s status – 5 - 8 Precepts for lay persons, 10 for novices, and 227 for monks. Such precepts prevent us from inadvertently misbehaving and, thus, falling subject to the causes of suffering. Based on *Dāna* and *Sīla*, *Samādhi* or concentration can be developed, leading to *Paññā* or Wisdom.

Like a conscientious farmer, we must tend to our fields carefully, preparing the soil to become a more con-

ductive environment, fertilizing it with the merit of good deeds, and planting the very best seed by setting ourselves on the Right course. Then, we must continue to be constantly vigilant, watering the sprouts of good behavior and weeding out misbehavior on a daily basis. In conclusion, such diligent care will lead to reaping the fruits of a peacefully happy life, filled with prosperity, and free from disaster and suffering.

Question 5: Thank you very much, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. You have really taught us a lot. Now, I would like to ask you to lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 61.]

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We reverently appreciate your superb meditation instruction.





Highest Blessings 03

**EXPERTISE, DISCIPLINE,
PLEASANT SPEECH**

01 March 2009

Question 1: Welcome, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We look forward to another of your insightful Sunday Dhamma Talks. This will be our 21st talk. Last time, we continued our series on “Highest Blessings” by considering the blessings of a conducive environment, past merit and being on the right course. Please begin by summarizing those lessons for us.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Our current series studies Lord Buddha’s Maṅgala Sutta on Life’s Highest Blessings. The Sutta is very popular because it briefly outlines thirty-eight important lessons for life in ten profound verses.

A heavenly messenger asked Lord Buddha to enumerate the most fortunate omens foretelling good luck, and he responded with the Maṅgala Sutta. The genius of his response was in recognizing that good fortune derives not from good luck, but from appropriate behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, each verse details factors which promote such beneficial conduct.

Last time, we discussed three blessings. The first was living in a conducive environment, such as a country, region, neighborhood, or family conducive to leading a peacefully happy life with prosperity. One aspect of this is availability of Lord Buddha's teachings and practice to support proper conduct. A good environment should include virtuous people who behave morally and a decent government with fair laws and upright law enforcement.

The second blessing cited the benefits of past merit, earned from good deeds either in previous lifetimes or earlier years. Such merit produces favorable results along side current efforts. To understand this, consider a farmer who planted and cared for coconut palms in his youth. The trees would continue to produce fruit and support him in his old age. Similarly, previous merit can bear fruit in this lifetime. There are ten Perfections or *Pāramī* that carry results from one lifetime to the next. They are: *Dāna* or generosity, *Sīla*

or morality, *Nekkhamma* or renunciation, *Paññā* or wisdom, *Viriya* or diligence, *Khanti* or forbearance, *Sacca* or truthfulness, *Adhiṭṭhāna* or resolution, *Mettā* or loving kindness, and *Upekkhā* or equanimity.

The third blessing studied last time was setting oneself on the Right course. This highlights wise goal-setting and vigilant care from moment to moment, mindfully living in accordance with nature to enjoy a peacefully happy life. One must remain constantly alert to purge hindrances and develop Right Wisdom, recognizing the good and bad in each situation as it arises.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, what are we going to study today?

Answer 2: Today we continue with Verse Four, which lists three more teachings. These are the blessings of broad expertise in the arts and sciences, thorough training in discipline and pleasantness of speech.

<i>Bāhusaccañca sippañca</i>	Broad expertise in arts and sciences,
<i>Vinayo ca susikkhito</i>	Thorough training in discipline,
<i>Subhāsītā ca yā vācā</i>	And pleasantness of speech,
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamaṃ</i>	This is most auspicious.

The Pāli word *Bāhusacca* means great or extensive learning until reaching thorough understanding with sufficient skills and expertise for the recognition, comprehension and achievement of the ultimate goal. We use the words “Arts and Sciences” to imply not only learning abstract knowledge, but also associated practical skills for day-to-day operations. It can be applied to both worldly undertakings and pursuit of Dhamma. With respect to ordinary worldly endeavors, any proper business that a layman learns in depth and pursues with skill and purity can lead to living a peacefully happy layman’s life.

With respect to Dhamma, it means learning to penetrate Dhamma thoroughly, including the Four Noble Truths, to the point where one reaches the heights of the *Ariyamagga* or transcendent path, progressing successively through the four Noble Disciple stages of Stream-Enterer or *Sotāpanna*, Once Returner or *Sakadāgāmī*, Non-Returner or *Anāgāmī*, and Buddhist Saint or *Arahant*. At each of these four Noble Disciple levels, the meditator rises first through the path or *magga* to reach the fruit or *Phāla*. Finally, after the *Arahant* level, the meditator attains the ultimate goal of Nirvana which is eternity, beyond birth and death, where Lord Buddha and his *Arahant* disciples can be seen, continuing to exist in peaceful happiness. Collectively, the four paths, four fruits, and Nirvana constitute the nine Supra-mundane phenomena of Lord Buddha’s teachings.

With respect to such extensive study and attainment of the ultimate goal, Lord Buddha identified four types of people, first, those who do not study and do not attain the ultimate goal, second, those who do not study hard, but do attain the goal, third, those who study hard, but do not attain the goal and finally, those who both study extensively and succeed in attaining the ultimate goal. Among those studying Dhamma, Lord Buddha praises both groups two and four for attaining the goal of Nirvana, but prefers the fourth group who study extensively, because they are also prepared to teach others.

The three higher trainings in *Dhamma* are Higher Training in Morality (*Adhisīla-sikkhā*), Higher Training in Mentality (*Adhicitta-sikkhā*), and Higher Training in Wisdom (*Adhipaññā-sikkhā*). The first two are labeled by the practice — following precepts and mental training. The third practice, however, is Insight or *Vipassanā* Meditation, but the training is labeled Wisdom or *Paññā*, which is the result sought. Only attainment of this end result — Right Wisdom in the Four Noble Truths — signifies ultimate success and leads to enlightenment.

Question 3: Thank you very much, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, could you please explain the second blessing of thorough training in discipline

Answer 3: The Pāli word *Susikkhito* (root: *sikkh-*) means training, or more specifically “virtuous self-training.” The word *Vinaya* means discipline. It is one of the three “baskets” of the *Tipiṭaka*, specifying rules for monks. The *Vinaya* is usually given highest priority, because only through constant, careful mindfulness of one’s own daily behavior, based on such precepts can a seeker progress in self-purification. There are various rules for those in different statuses. In Thailand, monks follow 227 precepts. Novices follow 10 rules, Thai nuns follow 8 rules and lay-people generally follow 5, sometimes taking 8 while temporarily focusing on self-purification in a temple.

Practicing *Vinaya* or Self Discipline by following precepts is the first training — the Training in Morality or *Sīla-sikkhā*. It leads one to exercise control in earning a livelihood and in daily speech and action. It also tends to purify the thoughts and intentions underlying these behaviors. Thus, it establishes the foundation of virtue or merit necessary to support further self-development through concentration and insight meditation. It is important that seekers practice wise discipline, understanding the rationale for each rule. This will enable one to distinguish proper behavior in each situation, leading to a peacefully happy life.

Question 4: Thank you, again, sir; now, finally, what about the third blessing of “pleasant speech.”

Answer 4: The Pāli word *Subhāsītā* means pleasant, amiable or agreeable. Lord Buddha’s teachings regarding proper speech are detailed with the fourth precept which is usually summarized as “don’t tell lies.” More correctly, it means “avoid improper speech.” This has four components: To avoid lying such as deception, to avoid harsh language such as cursing, to avoid divisive speech such as scandal-bearing, and to avoid misleading or useless speech such as gossip. The wise person should give up wrong speech and cultivate pleasant speech.

Question 5: Thank you very much, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We deeply appreciate your insightful and articulate teachings. Now, I would like to ask you to lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 61.]

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We reverently appreciate your superb meditation instruction.





Highest Blessings 04

**CARING FOR PARENTS, SPOUSE,
CHILDREN & FAULTLESS WORK**

05 April 2009

Question 1: Welcome, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We eagerly await another fascinating Sunday Dhamma Talk. This will be our 22nd interview, continuing our series on “Highest Blessings.” Please begin by summarizing last time for us.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Our current series discusses Lord Buddha’s Maṅgala Sutta on Life’s Highest Blessings. The Sutta is very popular because it summarizes thirty-eight important lessons for life in ten profound verses.

An angel asked Lord Buddha to identify the most fortunate omens foretelling good luck, and Lord Buddha responded with the Maṅgala Sutta. The genius of his re-

sponse was in recognizing that good fortune derives not from good luck, but from appropriate behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, each verse details beneficial deeds or factors promoting such conduct.

Last time, we discussed three blessings. The first was *Bāhusacca* or expertise. It can be applied to both worldly undertakings and pursuit of Dhamma. With respect to Dhamma, this means learning to penetrate Dhamma thoroughly, including the Four Noble Truths, to reaching the *Ariyamagga* or transcendent path, and then progressing successively to attain the ultimate goal of Nirvana.

The second blessing studied last time cited the benefits of discipline, or specifically “virtuous self-training” in the *Vinaya* Rules of Training or precepts. In Thailand, precepts vary from five for laypeople to 227 for monks. Practicing *Vinaya* is the first training, the Training in Morality or *Sīla-sikkhā*.

Finally, the third blessing studied last time was pleasant, amiable or agreeable speech. This is the fourth precept. It has four components: To avoid lying such as deception, harsh language such as cursing, divisive speech such as scandal-bearing, and misleading or useless speech such as gossip.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, sir, what will we study today?

Answer 2: Today we continue with Verse Five of the Maṅgala Sutta which lists three more blessings or auspicious behaviors. First, supporting your parents, second caring for your spouse and children, and third effecting faultless work.

<i>Mātāpitu upatthānam</i>	Supporting parents,
<i>Puttadārassa sangaho</i>	Caring for spouse and children,
<i>Anākulā ca kammanta</i>	And, performing faultless work.
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamaṃ</i>	This is most auspicious.

In this verse, Lord Buddha lists the most basic social responsibilities that one must fulfill to lead a peacefully happy life – the duties towards parents, spouse, and children, as well as the obligation to produce faultless work.

Question 3: That's very interesting, Lord Buddha seemed to emphasize monkhood to escape society. When did he teach about social responsibilities?

Answer 3: One morning, when Lord Buddha was living in Wat Veluvan near Rajagaha, he was approaching the town on his alms round when he came upon the son of a

millionaire named Singala. The youth was paying homage to the six Cardinal Directions – North, South, East, West, Above and Below. Singala explained that he had been taught this ritual by his father and continued it daily in respect for his father’s memory. Lord Buddha then taught Singala that the practice of transcendent Noble Disciples who are close to enlightenment is somewhat different. Lord Buddha’s teaching has been recorded in the Singalovada Sutta. This Sutta catalogues the basic social responsibilities of human beings.

Question 4: Thank you very much, sir. Now let us return to our specific blessings. What does Lord Buddha teach about the duty of supporting parents?

Answer 4: This is a mutual responsibility. While young, children receive loving care and prudent guidance from their parents. It is, therefore, their natural duty to support and cherish their parents, especially later on when father and mother grow frail. Lord Buddha lists the five key blessings that parents should provide for their children as:

First, preventing their sons and daughters from misconduct. Teaching them what is right and wrong and forbidding them from misbehaving.

Second, fathers and mothers must teach, constantly reiterate and personally model good conduct for their sons

and daughters to follow, so that the children will know about and carry out exceptional acts of goodness and kindness.

Third, parents must provide education for their sons and daughters broadly across the arts and sciences.

Fourth, father and mother should facilitate suitable marriages to appropriate persons for their children.

Fifth, parents must give their children their inheritance at the proper time.

In return, children should cherish and support their parents in five ways.

First, Sons and daughters must attend closely to their parents in order to provide them with all the requisites of life.

Second, children must carry out the social affairs of the business matters of their parents.

Third, children must maintain their parents' properties, their parents' nationality, and their parents' religious duties. Children must try to straighten out their parents' religious view if they have a wrong view. The sons and daughters must also maintain the good name of their parents and their lineage.

Fourth, children must also obey their parents and make themselves worthy of their parents' heritage, especially by attending closely to their parents' needs.

Fifth, upon and after their parents' death, the children should do good deeds, dedicated to them and share the merits with them.

Question 5: Thank you, sir. Now, what about responsibilities between husband and wife?

Answer 5: This is also mutual responsibility. Roles may change with the times and specific circumstances, but the partnership spirit must always remain strong.

First, the wife must arrange the chores of the household well and run it smoothly.

Second, she must distribute gifts fairly between her relatives and her husband's relatives.

Third, she must not engage in sexual misconduct with other men.

Fourth, she must keep and maintain in an orderly manner all things that are handed over by her husband.

Fifth, she must be skillful and diligent in all her housework.

In turn, the husband must also observe five responsibilities.

First, the husband must be kind and attentive to his wife.

Second, he must not treat his wife in an insolent manner.

Third, he must not engage in sexual misconduct with other women.

Fourth, he must give her control and authority over domestic matters.

Fifth, he must provide his wife with clothing, ornaments and gifts.

Question 6: Thank you, again, sir; now, finally, what about the third blessing of producing faultless work?

Answer 6: In the narrow sense, faultless work means conducting one's work commendably – producing quality products on time and on budget, with attention to detail and definite closure. In the broader sense, it means conducting your work in a way that does not bring any grief to yourself or to other beings. In this sense it implies avoiding unwholesome occupations such as those involving weapons, poisons, intoxicants or raising animals for food.

Question 7: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We deeply appreciate your insight. Now, would you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 61.]

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We reverently appreciate your superb meditation instruction.



Highest Blessings 05

**BE GENEROUS, VIRTUOUS,
HELPFUL TO RELATIVES
AND BLAMELESS**

03 May 2009

Question 1: Welcome, Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We look forward to another enlightening Sunday Dhamma Talk. This will be our 23rd program, continuing our current sequence on “Highest Blessings.” Could you please begin by summarizing what we covered last time.

Answer 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We are considering Life’s Highest Blessings in Lord Buddha’s Maṅgala Sutta. There are thirty-eight lessons for life in ten profound verses. An angel asked Lord Buddha to identify life’s most fortunate strokes of luck and Lord Buddha responded with the Maṅgala Sutta. The genius of his response was in recognizing that good fortune derives not from good

luck, but from virtuous behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, each verse details beneficial deeds or factors promoting such conduct.

Last time, we discussed three basic social responsibilities from the Singalovada Sutta necessary to lead a peacefully happy life. First, supporting parents, second caring for spouse and children, and third effecting faultless work. Parents must prevent their children from misconduct, teach and model good conduct, encourage kindness, provide education, and pass their inheritance to the children. In return, children must support and cherish parents, provide them with life's requisites and carry on their good name, business, and properties. After their parents' death, children should make merit for them.

Regarding married couples, the wife must run household smoothly, distribute gifts fairly to relatives, refrain from sexual misconduct, maintain her husband's things orderly, and be skillful and diligent in her housework. In turn, the husband must be kind and attentive to his wife, not being insolent, refrain from sexual misconduct, give his wife authority in domestic matters, and provide her with clothing, ornaments and gifts.

The third teaching covered last time was effecting faultless work. In the narrow sense, this means conducting one's work commendably. In the broader sense, it means

working in a way that does not bring any grief to oneself or other beings. This implies avoiding unwholesome occupations such as those involving weapons, poisons, intoxicants, human trafficking such as prostitution or raising animals for food.

Question 2: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, sir, what will we study today?

Answer 2: Today we continue with Verse Six of the Maṅgala Sutta which lists four more blessings or auspicious behaviors: First, generosity, second virtuous conduct, third helping relatives, and fourth blameless actions.

<i>Dānañca dhammacariyā ca</i>	Generosity and virtuous conduct,
<i>Ñatakānañca saṅgaho</i>	Helping relatives,
<i>Anavajjāni kammāni</i>	And, blameless actions.
<i>Etammaṅgalamuttamaṃ</i>	This is most auspicious.

In this verse, Lord Buddha continues beyond required minimal social responsibilities to spontaneous personal benevolence and goodness. He begins with generosity, the opposite of greed, then virtuous conduct based on Dhamma. Third comes helping relatives, and finally blameless actions beyond the reach of gossip.

Dāna or selfless Generosity lies at the heart of Buddhist practice as the first of the Ten Perfections. Pure *Dāna* is characterized by three components — right intention in advance, remaining happy throughout the act of giving, and remaining happy about the giving even after the act of *Dāna* is completed.

There are three levels of *Dāna*. First is *Amisadāna* or giving things – most notably the necessities of life – to someone in need. It can include thoughtless charitable donations, but is more personal, involving a degree of sacrifice. It means giving up something of your own to help someone else live better and find release from suffering.

Second is *Dhammadāna* or sharing Right Teachings for mindfulness and better living with the Right Wisdom to recognize good versus bad and follow the virtuous way leading to long-term happiness and prosperity, avoiding deterioration and the ever-present Highway to Hell. *Dhammadāna* also includes more mundane assistance with one's work and career, based on virtuous principles. The third and highest level of *Dāna* is *Apayadāna* – forgiving another's bad behavior towards oneself and giving pardon without harboring vengefulness.

The rewards of *Dāna* include human rebirth into a good, well-to-do, family and continued well-being into middle age, as well as adequate support in old age. If a donor performs *Dāna* himself, but does not urge others to do

likewise, he will have no followers in future life times. If he urges others, to donate but does not do so himself, he will have followers but no wealth. But, if he does both, he will have both wealth and followers. If he does not do either, he will be poor and alone, perhaps even a beggar.

In ideally pure *Dāna*, the donor is pure, with selfless motivation, the recipients are also pure or striving for purity and the object, advice *Dhamma* offered is also pure. Pure *Dāna*, like this offered to human beings who practice morality (*Sīla*) and meditation (*Bhāvanā*) can produce rewards lasting over more than 100,000 lifetimes. *Dāna* presented to those who know and teach Dhamma brings rewards over 10 million lifetimes. And, *Dāna* offered to those practicing to become Noble Disciples brings uncountable rewards.

Question 3: Thank you very much, sir. First, what can you point out for us about virtuous conduct?

Answer 3: Minimal virtuous conduct is following the five precepts to avoid killing, stealing, adultery, lying and intoxication. Positive virtuous conduct is ardently pursuing the opposites with the Divine Abode or *Brahmavhāra* mentality of Loving Kindness (*Mettā*), Compassion (*Karuṇā*), Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*), and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*). The positive opposites are doing good and helping other beings to overcome suffering, avoiding wrongful

occupations, practicing generosity, honesty, being true to one's partner and carefully controlling sexual activity, and avoiding alcohol and drugs.

Such behavior results in the immediate benefits of a stable, warm, loving family life and well-adjusted children, a reputation for sincerity and reliability, good friends, and an expanding network of comrades and colleagues who hold one near and dear, as well as good physical and mental health with clear, bright consciousness and the right mindfulness to tell good from bad, understanding Dhamma and forestalling physical and mental deterioration and contagious diseases.

Question 4: Thank you, sir. Now, what about helping relatives?

Answer 4: In our last broadcast, we detailed the reciprocal social responsibilities expected within the immediate family between parents and children and married couples. In brief, these included such items as providing loving care, life's requisites, education, and sound advice, as well as teaching correct behavior and maintaining the family reputation and property. Proactive virtuous conduct can expand some of these to the broader extended family. Relatives should be among the first recipients of thoughtful gifts and good advice. When opportunity arises, one should also offer relatives loving care, fundamental requi-

sites, and educational assistance beyond minimal expectations. Such behavior will strengthen family bonds, enhance one's reputation, and furnish mutual aid for reducing suffering.

Question 5: Thank you, again, sir. Now, what about the fourth blessing of blameless action?

Answer 5: Last time we discussed the blessing on effecting faultless work which means both conducting one's work commendably and doing work that does not bring any grief to yourself or to any other beings. This means, for example, avoiding unwholesome occupations such as dealing in weapons, poisons or intoxicants. The blessing of blameless actions broadens this concept to include actions outside the workplace and to include borderline actions which are not evilly intended, but can still foster gossip. Here, appearances count beyond actual intentions.

The 227 precepts for monks include many rules that aim at preventing such appearances and avoiding any excuse for gossip. Thus, for example, there are rules against being alone with a woman, passing something directly to or from a woman, having a *bhikkhunī* (a Buddhist nun) who is not a relative wash an old robe, or accepting a robe from a *bhikkhunī* except in exchange. For laymen, similar counsel might include avoiding regular visits to spinsters and widows, showering such women with gifts, etc. One must

consider not only the actual intention, but also what criticism it might raise in the minds of others and what gossip might ensue. Avoiding any such behavior is practicing blameless action.

Question 6: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We deeply appreciate your insight. Now, would you please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

[Please see meditation practice on Chapter 7 page 61.]

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We reverently appreciate your superb meditation instruction.



Highest Blessings 06

**AVOID EVIL, INTOXICANTS
AND CARELESSNESS**

07 June 2009

Question 1: Venerable Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, today I bid you a special welcome with heartfelt congratulations on your second honorary Ph.D., just received from Mahāmagut University. Please share some of your precious wisdom with us today. This will be our 24th broadcast, completing two years of uninterrupted Sunday Dhamma Talks. We continue our series on Lord Buddha's Highest Blessings. Please begin by summarizing the last broadcast.

Answer 1: Thank you, Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We are studying Life's Highest Blessings as presented in Lord Buddha's Maṅgala Sutta. Thirty-eight lessons for life are summarized in ten profound verses. An angel asked Lord Buddha to list life's

luckiest charms and he responded with the Maṅgala Sutta. His genius was recognizing that good fortune derives not from good luck, but from virtuous behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, each verse details beneficial behavior or factors promoting such conduct.

The last broadcast covered generosity, virtuous conduct, helping relatives, and blameless actions beyond the reach of gossip. Having previously covered expected social responsibilities, Lord Buddha moved on to extraordinary good deeds based on individual initiative. Such unanticipated acts of kindness generally reflect selfless Generosity or *Dāna*, the opposite of greed and the first of the Ten Perfections. There are three types of *Dāna*: *Amisadāna* or giving things, *Dhammadāna* or giving good advice based on Right Wisdom, and *Apayadāna* or giving forgiveness without vengefulness.

Minimal virtuous conduct is simply following the five precepts to avoid killing, stealing, adultery, lying and intoxication. Proactive virtuous conduct is ardently pursuing the opposites: actively alleviating suffering, giving things away, caring for one's spouse, voicing only kind, useful speech and fostering development of alert, clear-sighted mindfulness. Such actions stem from Divine Abode or *Brahmavihāra* mentality of Loving Kindness (*Mettā*), Com-

passion (*Karuṇā*), Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*), and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*).

Helping relatives is a widespread opportunity for proactive generosity beyond the minimum. One simply extends the loving care prevalent in the nuclear family to more distant relatives. Such generosity might begin with thoughtful gifts and good advice and expand to include assistance in finances, business, health care, education or other areas as needed.

Finally, blameless actions beyond the reach of gossip go beyond minimal faultless actions to also avoid actions not evilly intended which might foster gossip. Thus, for example, monk's interactions with women are severely restricted to forestall any possible gossip.

Question 2: Thank you, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. Now, sir, what is the next verse that we will consider today?

Answer 2: Today we continue with verse seven of the Maṅgala Sutta which lists three more auspicious behaviors: Avoiding evil, intoxicants, and carelessness.

<i>Āratī viratī pāpā</i>	Avoiding and abstaining from evil,
<i>Majjapānā ca saññamo</i>	Refraining from intoxicants,

Appamādo ca dhammesu Avoiding carelessness in daily behavior.

Etammaṅgalamuttamaṃ This is most auspicious.

For laypersons, the essentials of avoiding evil are following the five precepts: don't kill, steal, commit adultery, use improper speech, or get addicted to intoxicants. These precepts avoid the five major causes of rebirth in Hell. Self control avoids causing personal suffering and suffering to others. For example, immediate personal suffering from killing can include jail and getting killed in revenge as well as sickness, accidents and shorter lifespan. Lord Buddha saw that when a cosmos is new, the human lifespan averages 10^{140} [ten to the 140th power] years. Due to killing, however, it reduces by about one year per 100 years. Killing also results in rebirth in Sañjiva Hell where the average stay is 1.6×10^{12} [ten to the 12th power] earth years. Eventually, when reborn as humans, these beings are sickly and have short lifetimes. Both abortion and suicide are included as killing.

The addition of the word “abstaining from” in Lord Buddha’s highest blessing above implies strict observance of the Five Precepts. Mindful implementation of such dedicated behavior stems from underlying loving kindness. For example, in addition to avoiding fishing, raising animals for food, and swatting flies or mosquitoes, strict abstaining

from killing implies treating all beings with loving kindness and mercy with a reverence for life that might be reflected in such small acts as rescuing a turtle from a highway or returning a worm from cement to porous soil. Kindness wins good friends and develops warm relationships. Thus, humans who steer clear of killing, live peacefully, free from enemies and avoid horrific future consequences.

Similarly, strict abstention from stealing includes also corruption and cheating. Cheaters will be continually worried that their bad behavior might be revealed and may actually get punished by the justice system. They are also likely to be cheated by others. Most reap rebirth in Kālasutta Hell for swindlers and thieves where the average stay is 13×10^{12} [ten to the 12th power] earth years. Others become hungry ghosts. When finally reborn as humans, they will be very poor – perhaps even beggars. The positive opposite is doing goodness with generosity and honesty, such as donating one's own property, sharing useful knowledge, and sacrificing one's own time and happiness to help others.

Those who commit adultery or immoral sexual acts with uncontrolled passion suffer strained family relationships, quarrels, and broken homes and may even be killed in jealousy. Such behavior causes major social predicaments into the next generation, such as children born out-of-wedlock, delinquency, and psychological problems. The children tend to indulge in improper sexual behavior, following

their parents' example. This is very much what we see in our present social reality. Sexual offenders are usually reborn in Sanghāta Hell where the average stay is 104×10^{12} [ten to the 12th power] earth years. They may also be reborn as other hell beings, animals such as dogs, or as hungry ghosts. When eventually reborn as humans, sexual offenders may first be prostitutes for many lifetimes and then homosexuals. The wholesome, opposite of being true to one's partner fosters warm, stable family life and well-adjusted, happy children.

Lying, deceit, dishonesty and double-dealing earn one a reputation as unreliable which engenders lack of trust and fewer and fewer good friends, colleagues, and loving partners. Liars are usually reborn into Roruva Hell where the average stay is 831×10^{12} [ten to the 12th power] earth years. They may also be reborn as hungry ghosts or animals. When reborn as humans they are unreliable and suffer from a very bad smelling mouth. The wholesome opposite of being honest develops a reputation for sincerity and reliability which builds interpersonal trust and an expanding network of good friends and colleagues who hold one near and dear.

Question 3: What about avoiding intoxicants, the next Highest Blessing?

Answer 3: Addiction, whether to alcohol, drugs or smoking, brings disastrous consequences in both health and

social life. These include Sclerosis of the Liver, Delirium Tremens, loss of employment, marital separation, divorce, and homelessness. Addicts are reborn in Mahāroruva Hell where the average stay is $6,635 \times 10^{12}$ [ten to the 12th power] earth years. Similarly, Mahātāpana Hell takes those descending the “Road to Ruin” (*Apayamukha*) which integrates intoxication, sexual excesses and gambling. The average stay there is genuinely cosmic. When finally reborn as humans, addicts will be insane for many lifetimes and then mentally retarded. Avoiding alcohol and drugs produces clear consciousness, right mindfulness, and rapid recognition of good over evil.

Question 4: Thank you, sir. Now, what can you tell us about avoiding carelessness in daily behavior?

Answer 4: *Appamāda* – avoiding carelessness in daily behavior, or steadfastness in virtue, means living with constantly alert mindfulness, always asking oneself am I doing the right thing? Am I saying the right thing? Am I thinking the right thing? This “heedfulness” constantly fosters doing goodness and avoiding evil, resulting in only positive karmic consequences. Once evil has been done, its penalties cannot be avoided. Thus, only constant vigilance from moment to moment can protect one and foster growth. Ultimately, Lord Buddha points to such Mindfulness, practiced both in inward meditation and outward action, as the

path to Nirvana. Note that Nirvana does not mean “Nothingness.” It comes from *Ni-* meaning “departure from” and *vāna* meaning “craving.” It is a mental state accessible here and now. Ultimately, Nirvana is the “deathless” with supreme, everlasting happiness – the way to avoid the suffering of rebirth, old age, sickness and death. Lord Buddha’s last word was *Appamāda*, “Don’t be careless.”

Question 5: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We deeply appreciate your wisdom. Now, please lead us in a few moments of meditation.

Phra Rajyanvisith: Requesting Five Precepts

Today we will begin by requesting the Five Precepts first and then continue on to meditation.

Layman:

*Ahaṃ bhante visuṃ visuṃ rakkhaṇatthāya
tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlani yācāmi,*

Venerable Sir, I ask for refuge and for the five precepts.

*Dutiyampi, ahaṃ bhante visuṃ visuṃ
rakkhaṇatthāya tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlani yācāmi,*

For the second time, Venerable Sir, I ask for...

*Tatiyampi, ahaṃ bhante viṣuṃ viṣuṃ
rakkhaṇatthāya tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlani yācāmi.*

For the third time, Venerable Sir, I ask for ...

Phra Rajyanvisith followed by Layman:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Homage to the Exalted One, the Holy One, the Perfectly
Enlightened One.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I go to the Buddha for refuge,

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I go to the Dhamma for refuge,

Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

I go to the Saṅgha for refuge,

Dutiyaṃpi, Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the second time, ...

Dutiyaṃpi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Dutiyaṃpi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatiyaṃpi, Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

For the third time, ...

Tatiyaṃpi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Tatiyampi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

Phra Rajyanvisith (Pāli Only) followed by Layman
(Pāli & English)

1. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
2. *Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*
I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. *Kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ Samādiyāmi.*
I undertake the precept to refrain from unlawful sexual activity.
4. *Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.
5. *Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī. sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Imāni Pañca Sikkhāpadāni Samādiyāmi.*

Layman:

Imāni pañca sikkhāpadāni samādiyāmi.

I undertake to observe these Five Precepts

Imāni pañca sikkhāpadāni samādiyāmi.

Imāni pañca sikkhāpadāni samādiyāmi.

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Sīlena Sugatiṃ Yanti.*

These Precepts bring a happy life.

Layman: *Sādhu.* - It is proper

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Sīlena Bhogasampadā*

These Precepts bring prosperity

Layman: *Sādhu*

Phra Rajyanvisith: *Sīlena Nibbutiṃ Yanti. Tassmā Sīlaṃ Visodhaye.*

All beings will attain Nirvana by *Sīla*. Thus, *Sīla* is holy [should be purified].

Layman: *Sādhu*

Phra Rajyanvisith: Prostrate three times to the Buddha Statue, if available. Now we begin meditation.



Figure 1: The Meditation Posture

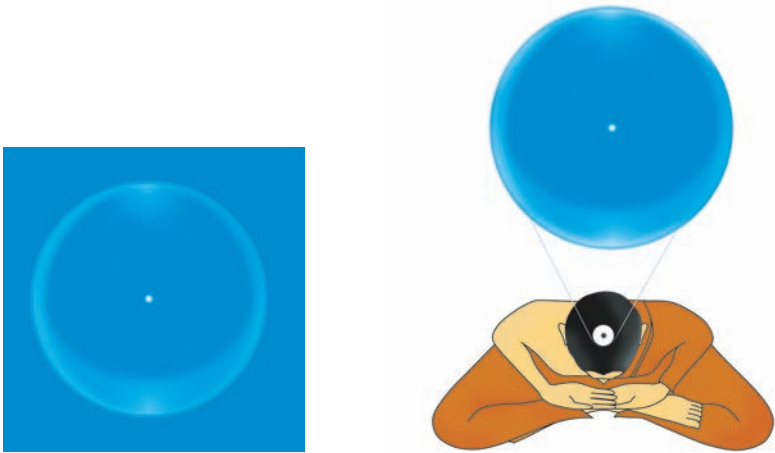
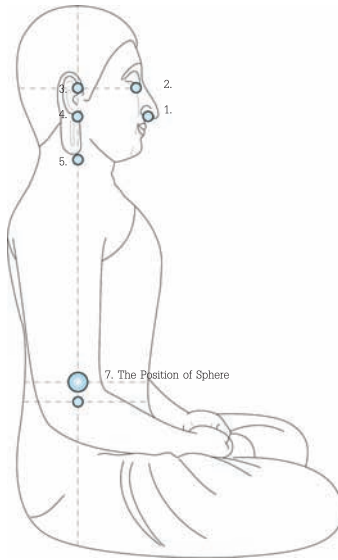


Figure 2: The Object of Visualization at the Center of the Body

Meditation Practice

We sit upright in a regular meditation posture, cross-legged as seen in some Buddha images, with the right leg resting upon the left. The right hand rests on the left, palm turned upwards, with the right index finger just touching the left thumb. The body is straight and the mind is fully alert. Take a deep breath and relax the body until you feel comfortable. Close your eyelids lightly, do not press them.



We use two aids: a mantra, “*Sammā Arahang*” and an object of visualization, a bright, clear luminous sphere called *Āloka Kasiṇa* or light object. Using these aids, we draw the mind inward to the center of the body and the mind components of vision, memory, thought and awareness come together into oneness.

Imagine a bright, clear, luminous sphere located at the center of the body, two inches or five centimeters above the navel. Rest your mind inside the sphere and Repeat “*Sammā Arahang, Sammā Arahang, Sammā Arahang,*” continually and mindfully. Look for the pinpoint of bright light at the center of the center. Focus your mind there. Stop Still.

When the mind stops perfectly still at the center of the center, the center expands itself and becomes a new sphere. Place your mind gently inside the new sphere. Look for the pinpoint of bright light at the center of the center. Place your mind there. Stop still. Eventually, a bright clear sphere will arise. This is the Dhamma Sphere. Do not be overjoyed. Keep your mind calm in equanimity. Hold the mind still, and stop repeating *Sammā Arahant*. Just concentrate at the center of the Dhamma Sphere. This is your own nucleus which gives rise to this body and this mind. You should experience the greatest happiness you have ever known – not happiness based on an external object, but happiness arising from within, due to being fully pure from the Five Hindrances.



Continue meditating as before by stopping still at the center of the center of the Dhamma Sphere. When the concentration is just right, sphere after sphere pops up by itself from the center, each one inside the previous one.

The Spheres of *Sīla* or moral behavior, *Samādhi* or concentration, *Paññā* or Wisdom, *Vimutti* or transcendence, and *Vimuttiñāṇadassana* or insight appear one after the next. Enter each sphere, successively, and focus your mind still at the pinpoint of bright light or hollow spot at the center. When the mind stops still, a new sphere emerges.



Figure 3: Crude Human Body Figure 4: Refined Human Body

When you reach the Insight Sphere, you continue in the same way, stopping still at the center. Again the center expands itself, but this time, instead of a new sphere, you see your own Refined Human Body, sitting cross-legged in meditation position, facing the same direction as you are facing. Don't be startled, just keep observing. It looks very much like yourself. It has your own face, but it is brighter, purer, and more radiant. It may even be crystal clear. Take your time to make the body and its pedestal bright and clear.

When you feel comfortable with the Refined Human Body, place your mind gently inside the Refined Human Body. Expand to fill the whole body. Feel the body from the inside. Feel the arms. Feel the legs. Feel the head. Feel

the toes. Say to yourself, “I am the Refined Human Body. I have become the Refined Human Body. I have the Refined Human mentality.” When you feel comfortable inside the Refined Human Body, place your mind gently inside the sphere at the center of the refined human body. Focus on the pinpoint of bright light at the center of the center. The center expands itself and you see your Celestial Body. [Please See all 18 bodies on page 66.]

For those who reach this state of mind, go on with the same procedure. As larger and larger, more and more radiant bodies appear, become each more refined body, one-by-one, until you reach *Dhammakāya*. *Dhammakāya* looks like a transparent Buddha statue – very radiant, very pure! The Buddha statue, sitting cross-legged, is about 9 meters in height and width. Become *Dhammakāya* fully, right away.

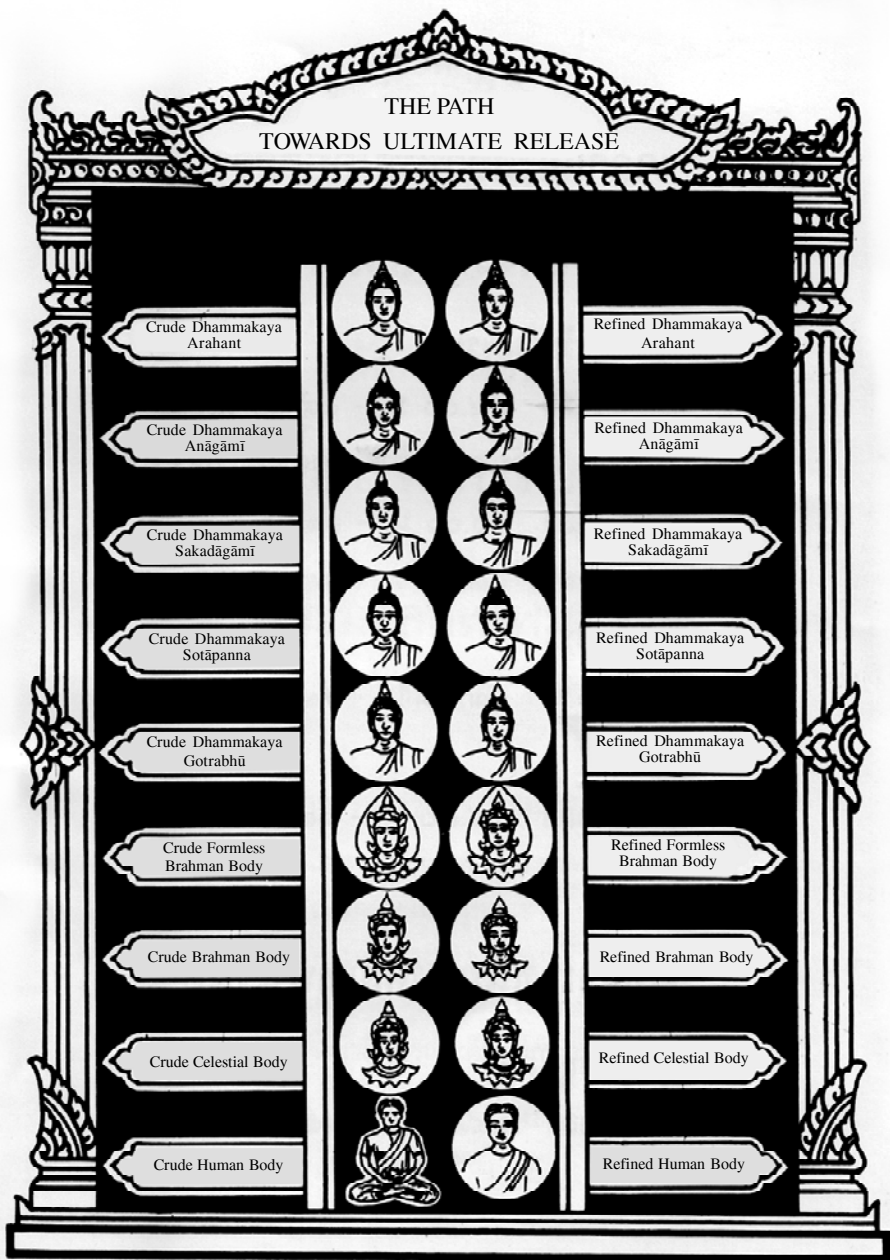
And now, let us share all of the merit that we have made in this meditation and previously – together with all of our loving kindness – with all beings everywhere throughout the universe. We share with our parents, our grandparents, our family, our teachers and our friends. We share with our King and our Queen and the whole royal family. May Lord Buddha bless all of us to lead a peaceful, happy life, free from suffering, free from problems and free from enmity, and may this meditation help to bring us closer to transcendence and Nirvana. [Pause]. And, now, we come slowly out of meditation and open the eyes.



Figure 5: Dhammakāya

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. We reverently appreciate your superb meditation instruction.

Phra Rajyanvisith: May Lord Buddha bless all of you. We would like to invite you all to join us for meditation at Wat Luang Phor Sodh, any Sunday. Our bus leaves from Wat Saket, the Golden Mountain Temple, at seven o'clock every Sunday morning. I lead morning chanting and meditation for all, beginning at nine thirty, and Phra Bart conducts an afternoon meditation session in English from twelve to two P.M. Please come join us. For details, please see our English websites at www.dhammacenter.org and www.meditation-park.org or our Thai website at www.dhammakaya.org.



SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

In summary, this volume presents a series of broadcasts on Life's Highest Blessings as found in the Maṅgala Sutta. The sermon is very popular because it outlines thirty-eight important lessons for life in ten profound verses. Angels were debating the luckiest signs or most fortunate omens and a heavenly messenger posed the question to Lord Buddha as follows:

<i>Bahū devā manussā ca</i>	Many angels and men
<i>Maṅgalāni acintayum</i>	Have pondered auspicious omens
<i>Ākaṅkhamānā sothānam</i>	Wishing for blessings.
<i>Brūhi maṅgalamuttamaṃ</i>	Please tell us the most auspicious signs.

Lord Buddha replied with the Maṅgala Sutta. The genius of his response was in recognizing that good fortune

derives not from good luck, but from appropriate behavior based on Right Wisdom. It is the practice of Dhamma that is truly auspicious. Thus, each verse details beneficial behavior or factors promoting such conduct.

This volume presents the first six verses of responses, which list 20 lessons for life. They are highly prized because Lord Buddha often taught specifically for monks, but these are worldly Dhamma appropriate for all.

In retrospective overview, the lessons covered here are as follows:

- Chapter 2: Avoid fools, Seek out the wise, Honor the worthy.
- Chapter 3: Live in a conducive environment, Have merit from the past, Set yourself on the right course.
- Chapter 4: Have broad expertise in arts and sciences, Have thorough training in discipline, Have pleasantness of speech.
- Chapter 5: Support your parents, Care for your spouse, Care for your children, Perform faultless work.
- Chapter 6: Practice generosity, Perform virtuous conduct, Help relatives, Perform blameless actions.

Chapter 7: Avoid and abstain from evil, Refrain from intoxicants, Avoid carelessness in daily behavior.

This listing enables us to decipher the priorities underlying Lord Buddha's teachings. First concern is immediate associates: avoid fools and seek out the wise. Fools may take you down with them, but the wise may open opportunities. Second is one's broader environment. How well does it support virtue and purity? At the same time, Lord Buddha recognizes the importance of the temporal context – merit from the past and setting the right course for future development.

Third priority is education – expertise, discipline and social skills such as pleasant speech. Fourth is performing expected social duties – caring for parents, spouse and children and performing faultless work. Fifth is demonstrating personal morality that exceeds social expectations with exceptional generosity, virtue and blameless actions. Finally, sixth, is Lord Buddha's often repeated counsel to be ever mindful, every minute of every day, avoiding temptation, evil, intoxicants and carelessness. These were Lord Buddha's last words as he passed on to Nirvana.

To summarize further, Lord Buddha's advice implies:

1. Check where you are: Immediate associates, broader environment, temporal channel and current aims. Are they conducive to virtue? Can you improve?
2. Check your skills: expertise, discipline & social skills. Are they adequate? Can you improve?
3. Check your behavior: Are you meeting social expectations? Exceeding them? Can you improve?
4. Check your mindfulness: Are you alert enough? Can you improve?

In conclusion, the book has presented worldly Dhamma applicable to all of us. It lists 20 specific items that we can check ourselves against and contemplate improving, remembering that our level of virtue will determine the quality of our next rebirth.

Volume Five, will continue this series, but don't expect just more of the same. Lord Buddha always seems to find a way to help us transcend our present limits. These talks are aired on the first Sunday of every month at 8:00 AM, Bangkok Time (GMT+7:00), over four frequencies of the Thai National Broadcasting System: FM 88, FM 95.5, FM 107, and AM 918. We hope you can join us.

Sound tracks and transcripts of the broadcasts with their meditations can be downloaded from Wat Luang Phor

Sodh's English-language website at www.dhammadcenter.org or our Thai website at www.dhammadakaya.org. See also www.meditationpark.org for other meditations. Please email any questions to bmi@dhammadcenter.org.

Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro
Interviewer and Editor



ชื่อ
พระครู
รอด
จาก...



Appendices

- A. The Author: Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith 74
- B. Venerable Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni 78
- C. Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām 83
- D. The Buddhist Meditation Institute 97

Appendix A



The Author:

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith

Meditation Master, Buddhist Scholar & Educator

1. Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām (July 9, 1991).
2. President of the Executive Committee, National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand (Elected by the Directors of Provincial Meditation Institutes from throughout the country at a Seminar and Practicum organized by the National Buddhist Office 23-25 April 2008 at Wat Yanawa, Bangkok, Thailand and recognized by the Sangha Body).
3. Director and Principal-Meditation Master, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute (Since 2006) *An Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University*.
4. Vice-chairman of the Administrative Committee, Mahachulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya University Region 15 Academic Services Center (November 19, 2007).
5. Director, Dhammakāya Buddhist Meditation Institute (1981).

6. Manager, Rajburi Provincial Pali Studies Center (Appointed by the Sangha Body, October 20, 1999).
7. Director, Rajburi Provincial Meditation Practice Center (Appointed by the Sangha Body, March 6, 2001).
8. Director, Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy (2009).

Profile as a Monk

Name:	Phra Rajyanvisith (Phra Ajahn Maha Sermchai Jayamangalo) Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām, and Director of Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Institute
Date of Birth:	March 6, 1929.
Entered Monkhood:	March 6, 1986.
Buddhist Dhamma:	Completed grade three of Buddhist Theory, and grade six of Pali studies.
Meditation Master:	Venerable Phra Rajbrahma-thera, Deputy Abbot, Meditation master, Wat Paknam

Meditation Experience: Practiced Buddhist meditation since 1970.

Preceptorship: Appointed since January 31, 1996.

Ecclesiastical Title from December 5, 1998: Phra Bhavana Visutthikhun

Ecclesiastical Title from December 5, 2004: Phra Rajyanvisith



An honorary Doctorate in Buddhist Principles in Management from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in 2007.

An honorary Doctorate in Religious Study in Buddhism from Mahamakut Buddhist University in 2009.

Profile before Monkhood

Work: Research specialist, United States Information Services (USIS), Bangkok.

Visiting lecturer in research methodology, research and evaluation, and public opinion surveys to various academic institutions (Thammasart University, Bangkok University, etc.).

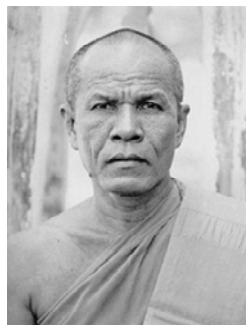
Academic Qualifications: Certificate in accountancy, Bachelors of Commerce, and Masters of Arts in public administration (Honors), Thammasart University.

Certificate in social science research, Institute of Social Research, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

Certificate in Wang OIS Management Courses, organized by USIS, Washington DC, USA.

Appendix B

Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni (Sodh Candasaro)



The Late Abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen

The master of the *Vijjā Dhammakāya* approach, the late Abbot of Wat Paknam, the Venerable Chao Khun Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni, is fondly known and revered throughout the land as Luang Phor Wat Paknam, or simply as “Luang Phor Yai,” meaning senior father or meditation master.

Luang Phor was born October 10, 1884 (BE 2427) to a humble rice-merchant family of Supanburi Province as Sodh, the second child of Nai Ngern and Nang Sudjai Meekaewnoi. As was typical in those days, young Sodh received his education from the temples. At fourteen, when his father died, he became the chief breadwinner for the family. Successful as he was in rice trading, at age nineteen the compassionate young man resolved to become a monk (*Bhikkhu*) for life.

Having made arrangements to ensure his mother’s welfare, the young man entered monkhood three years later,

in July 1906 (BE 2449). At the age of twenty-two, he was ordained as Candasaro Bhikkhu at Wat Songpeenong, near his home. Phra Ajahn Dee of Wat Pratusarn, Supanburi, was his main Preceptor.

The day after his ordination, Candasaro Bhikkhu began meditation practice and study of Pali scriptures in search of deeper and wider knowledge, he moved from Wat Songpeenong to Wat Bodhi (Wat Phra Chetupon Vimomangkalaram) in Bangkok. There, he frequented the centers of meditation practice and Pali study.

Soon, Luang Phor was recognized by his teachers, Phra Khru Yanavirati (Po) of Wat Bodhi and Phra Ajahn Singha of Wat Lakorn Tham, as an accomplished meditation instructor.

During those early dry seasons, Luang Phor adopted *Dhutangavatra*, the Austere Practices for Purification such as wandering in solitude through the forest wilderness, staying in caves and practicing the *Dhamma* with piety.

After ten years, Luang Phor set aside his informal study of the Pali Scriptures, having reached sufficiency to read the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Thereafter he devoted himself totally to meditation practice.

Luang Phor spent the next Buddhist Lent at Wat Bang Khoo Vieng, on Bangkok Noi Canal, where his benefactor,

Phra Ajahn Choom, was the abbot. There, at nightfall on the full-moon day of September, in his twelfth year as a *Bhikkhu*, Luang Phor prepared himself for meditation in the *uposatha*. He invoked illumination and guidance, and made a vow dedicating his life to Buddhism. Luang Phor vowed not to rise from his seat in front of the Buddha statue until he was permitted to attain some understanding of the *Dhamma* as discerned by the Buddha.

With his mind set and its components of vision, memory, thought and cognition all at rest at the center of his body, two “Anguli” (joints of the middle finger) above the navel, Luang Phor was able to penetrate the full depths of the *Dhamma* as it was revealed to and by the Buddha. That revelation of the Dhamma and ever more refined *Dhammakāyas* (Dhamma bodies) was so profound that it was only possible when the mind was at rest at the body’s center. After lent, Luang Phor went to teach at Wat Bang Pla, where three monks and four laymen who followed his meditation procedure were also able to attain various degrees of insight. Thereafter, Luang Phor gradually became renowned throughout the land.

Somdej Phra Vanarat, Head of Bhasicharoen Sangha District, spotted Luang Phor’s potential and requested him to assume the Abbotship of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen. This was a neglected and deteriorating monastery erected five centuries earlier. Luang Phor wanted to decline this request,

but he could not. With utmost patience and remarkable leadership, Luang Phor gradually rebuilt the monastery until it is today one of the largest and most important monasteries in the land. In 1949 (BE 2492), Luang Phor received the ecclesiastical rank of Phra Bhavana-Kosolthera. This was followed by the title Phra Mongkol-Rajmuni, and in 1957 (BE 2500) by the title Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni.

Vijjā Dhammakāya, the revelation of the *Dhamma* as attained by Luang Phor, was the heart of his teaching. His service to Buddhism can be seen from his regular routine:

- Meditating day and night with *Bhikkhus* and *Upāsikās* in different sessions.
- Leading *Bhikkhus* and *Sāmaṇeras* in the uposatha every morning and evening, paying homage to the *Triple Gems* and ending with a sermon.
- Teaching public meditation practice every Thursday at 2:00 pm.
- Delivering public sermons on holy days (*Uposatha* or *Wan Phra*) and Sundays.
- Supervising the Pali Institute.

Thus, Luang Phor devoted his time and effort almost exclusively to teaching meditation. His disciples multiplied

into the thousands. It was not uncommon for revered *bhikkhus* in far corners of the country, who apparently never met Luang Phor, to know him well and to respect him as their mentor.

His decease at the age of 75, on February 3, 1959 (BE 2502) was just a pause for the immortal master. His life should serve to remind other mortals to pursue their own obligations to the *Noble Path* carefully. Luang Phor's teachings live on, manifesting the *Ultimate Righteous Truth*.

*Written by Phra Bhavana-Kosolthera
Veera Ganuttamo (Now Phrarajbrahmathera)*





Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām **Damnoen Saduak District, Rajburi Province**

1. Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām

The temple is located on the beautifully landscaped campus of the Dhammakāya Buddhist Meditation Institute at kilometer 14 of the Damnoen Saduak - Bangpae Road, in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province, 93 kilometers from Bangkok. It encompasses 244 rais. The 74 rais surrounding the main monastery were registered in 1991 as Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām, in loving memory of Luang Phor Wat Paknam, Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni (Sodh Candasaro). Here is a brief Profile:

Address: 109 Moo 7 Damnoen Saduak - Bangpae Road,
Damnoen Saduak District, Rajburi Province,
70130.

Phone: (032) 745-180, Ext. 220/191

Fax: (032) 745-170

Websites: www.dhammacenter.org

Email: bmi@dhammacenter.org

2. Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Institute



1. President

His Holiness Somdej Phra Buddhajahn: Abbot, Wat Saket, Sangha Council & Chairman, Acting Sangharaja Committee.

2. Vice-President

His Holiness Somdej Phra Mahā Ratchamangkalajahn: Abbot, Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen & Sangha Council Member.



3. General Manager and Meditation Master

Phra Rajyanvisith: Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām & Coordinator, Provincial Meditation Institutes.



4. Financial and Property Management

Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Foundation.

3. Founding

- 21 May 1991 Registered as a Wat by the Ministry of Education and recognized by the Sangha body
- 2 May 1992 Consecrated as a Temple by His Holiness Somdej Phra Buddhagosajahn, Former Abbot of Wat Sampaya, Bangkok, and Sangha Council Member.

4. Recognized Excellence

- 1999 Recognized by the Sangha Body as Rajburi Provincial Pali Studies Center.
- 2004 Recognized by the Sangha Body as Rajburi Provincial Meditation Institute.
- 2005 Designated by the Sangha Body as an “Exemplary Development Temple with Noteworthy Success.”
- 2006 Established as Sangha Ecclesiastical Region 15 Academic Services Unit for Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (for four provinces).
- 2006 Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute established as an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University.

- 2008 Elected the National Coordination Center of Provincial Meditation Institutes of Thailand.
- 2009 Established by the Sangha Body as the Center for Development of Virtues and Ethics for the Security of the Nation, Religion and Monarchy

5. Objectives

1. To help humans rid themselves of suffering and penetrate Nirvana.
2. To educate laity and monks to become knowledgeable, virtuous instructors spreading Lord Buddha's teachings.
3. To become a center of virtue supporting peace for all world beings.
4. To become a pilgrimage center for the faithful:
 - Displaying sacred objects worthy of veneration.
 - Providing a clean, beautiful, serene environment for peaceful meditation and introspection.
5. To faultlessly manage and preserve the sacred treasures and offerings of the faithful.

6. Buildings and Grounds

1. The Ubosota Hall is a three-story building located on its own island, surrounded by trees. Like most Wat Luang Phor Sodh buildings, it is all white, with a white roof to indicate purity. Designed by the king's architect in the late Ayuthaya style, it won the award for Outstanding Preservation of Architecture in 1996.



The building features Buddha Relics and over forty Buddha images made of semi-precious gemstones or valuable metals, located at the front of the main assembly hall on the third floor. The second floor displays a large plaque listing major donors. The first floor, which can hold approximately one hundred people, has the history and rules of the wat displayed on the wall. Surrounding the main assembly hall are six small viharas or chapels, three on each side. The two middle viharas contain rare Buddha images and an image of Luang Phor Sodh. The others are used for breakout meditation groups.



There are over 40 Buddha images located inside the Ubosota Hall. They are made of fine materials such as Burmese jade, rock crystal, Averturine, solid gold, alloy of gold and silver.

2. The Information Center, situated at the central fork as the first building to receive visitors, is a white two-story enclosed pavilion with an extremely steep white roof. Its main Buddha image is in blessing position. There is also an image of Luang Phor Sodh where the laity can pay homage. Originally, this was a multipurpose hall for all temple activities. It has now become a museum filled with Buddha relics, Buddha statues, and related displays.

3. The Vihara of Luang Phor Sodh is located at the center of its own sacred island right by the central fork. It is surrounded by rare trees with historical significance for Buddhism. There are two images of Luang Phor Sodh, a large, ferocious standing image and a relatively small, approachable sitting statue that devotees love to honor with gold leaf and offerings.

4. The Two Twin School Buildings are three-stories high and constructed of red brick. They are located at the back, left of the campus, by the Dining Hall. These buildings get heavy use. Monks study Dhamma and Pali for the national exams. For Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, the Wat teaches Bachelors and Masters Degree programs in Buddhism. The buildings also service a continual stream of grade school and high school students coming for brief retreats. Most popular is the library with its internet connection.

5. Sala Somdej Dining Hall is a three-story white building which can serve up to 500 monks and novices on the second level. The first level provides both dining hall and sleeping quarters for large numbers of Laity. The top floor is an assembly hall for up to 500 persons, used for morning and evening chanting, Sunday Dhamma practice, and major special events.



6. The Meditation Vihara, located in the lake, near the Abbot's residence, is the Wat's most beautiful building. Four equal wings join in sweeping upward curves into a tall central tower with an onion-shaped cap. Inside, one wing is devoted to Buddha statues and another to Buddha relics.

The remainder seats about 130 meditators sitting cross-legged. Accessible from both banks of the lake by two bridges, the hall is occupied twenty-four hours a day by shifts of advanced meditators cultivating world peace. It is open on weekends for visitors to pay homage to the large golden Buddha statue and Buddha Relics.

7. Phra Maha Cetiya Somdej, under construction, will be a huge, four-story cetiya-shaped pilgrimage and conference center displaying the wat's exceptional collection of Buddha relics. Four wings and connecting stairways come together to form a Cediya shape.



A Sample of Buddha Relics at Wat Luang Phor Sodh

The first floor will provide space for up to 2,000 lay persons to attend conferences or meditate. It will also contain the administrative offices. The second floor will provide space for up to 2,000 monks to meditate. The third floor will be a museum exhibiting Buddha statues demonstrating all the various poses as well as samples of meditation practices. The smaller fourth floor at the neck of the Cetiya is where the Buddha Relics will be displayed.



8. The grounds of the wat and institute campus are noteworthy in themselves. The first five years of site development were devoted to constructing the lake, rivers, forests and islands and planting rare and special trees from around the world. This effort won a royal award for turning the worn-out rice land back to nature. Most of the trees under which various Buddhas have become enlightened are represented.

**Some Bodhi Trees at Wat Luang Phor Sodh
under which various Buddhas
have become enlightened**



Sri Mahābodhi Tree, Lord Buddha, Samaṇa Gotama



Borneo Mahogany Tree, Lord Buddha, Maṅgala

7. Programs in Thai and English

The Wat conducts numerous educational programs on meditation and scripture study in both Thai and English, as follows:

Programs in Thai

1. **Sunday Dhamma Practice:** Wat bus leaves Wat Saket, Bangkok, at 07:00 and returns about 16:00.
2. **Workshops:** 3, 5, 7, or 10-day meditation-Dhamma study workshops for various lay groups – students, teachers, government officials, state enterprise/private business personnel, etc., (year-round except during the rainy-season), train over 20,000 participants per year.
3. **Retreats:** Two semi-annual retreats for hundreds of laity and monks, May and December 1-14, since 1982.
4. **Vipassanā Teacher Training:** Two-week courses for meditation masters.
5. **Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University:** Pre-university studies for Monks in Region 15, BA in Buddhist Studies, MA in Buddhist Administration.
6. **Dhamma Studies School:** Three month preparation for National Dhamma Exams (Nakdhamma 3, 2, 1).

7. **Pali Studies School:** Three month preparation for national Pali exams in grammar and levels 1-9.
8. **Radio Broadcasts:** Lecture on Dhamma (Mostly) every 3rd Sunday of every other month at 08.00 - 08.30 AM. on National Broadcasting Station of Thailand, Own FM radio station plus weekly and monthly national and international Dhamma Talks in Thai.
9. **TV Broadcasts:** Every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month at 05:00 on Modern 9 TV, every morning at 05.00 - 06.00 AM. on People Channel.
10. **Publications:** Over 70 books, numerous pamphlets, and a monthly journal in Thai.
11. **Ordination for Monks:** Ordinations most Saturdays plus special group ordinations.
12. **Ordination for Novices:** Two-week “Hot Season” Novices Program.
13. **Special Ceremonies:** Four major Buddhist holidays plus Dhammakāya holidays plus special events.
14. **24-hour Meditation for World Peace** Continual advanced meditation in shifts around the clock. New Meditation Vihara in the lake now in service.
15. **Pilgrimage Center:** Now building Phra Maha Cetiya Somdej to display the Wat’s exceptional collection of Buddha relics.

16. **Center for making merit:** The Wat is offering very sacred Buddha statues as “Thank you” for major donations for Cetiya construction, some donated by celestial beings.
17. **Website:** Dhamma & meditation in Thai on *www.dhammadakaya.org*.

Programs in English

1. **Meditation Guidance:** Year-round, semi-private meditation guidance in English, which has proved astoundingly effective. Come anytime and stay as long as you like.
2. **Retreats:** Three intensive retreats May 1-14, August 1-14, and December 1-14.
3. **Meditation Online:** Meditation guidance, Q&A interaction, forums, and downloadable meditations at *www.meditationpark.org*.
4. **Website:** Buddhist Meditation Institute (An Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University) at *www.dhammadcenter.org*.
5. **Radio Broadcasts:** Monthly Dhamma Talks over National Broadcasting Service of Thailand – 08:00 on the first Sunday of each month on FM88, FM95.5, FM107, and AM918. Downloadable from websites and published every six months.

International Meditation

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute



An Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University



Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute, an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University, teaches Concentration-Insight Meditation (*Samadha-Vipassanā*), which has proved astoundingly effective. Meditation proceeds to successively higher levels by always focusing at the center of the center.

1. Meditation Guidance

BMI offers Meditation Guidance or semi-private tutoring in English all year round, starting whenever you choose and lasting as long as you like. If you have the time, please try to come for 10 days to two weeks, for the best result. It generally requires 5-7 days to develop the inner calm necessary for rapid progress. But, individuals vary greatly, so all are welcome for either longer or briefer periods.

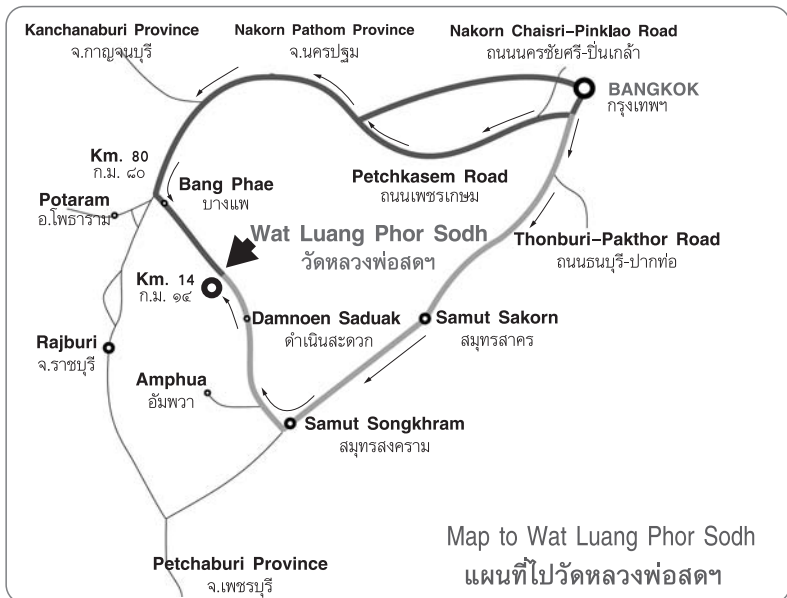
2. Meditation Retreats

BMI offers three intensive retreats per year, May 1-14, August 1-14, and December 1-14. Retreats are similar to guided meditation, but more intensive, with a sunrise meditation at 05:30. They usually involve 20-50 international meditators. Several hundred monks and laity attend the Thai retreat simultaneously in May and December. During retreats there is more access to the venerable Meditation Master in joint Thai-English sessions. This is especially useful for those who become advanced. There is also more chance to study Buddhist practices, Vinaya, Dhamma and Chanting. The large number of participants necessarily implies less silence.

3. Contact

Please see our website www.dhammacenter.org, where you can register online or **email** us at bmi@dhammacenter.org or call Phra Bart at (+66) 089-068-0521 or Phra Bill at (+66) 086-364-8808.

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakāyārām is 2 hours southwest of Bangkok by #78 air-conditioned bus, which leaves from the left-hand sidewalk outside the Southern Bus Terminal, every 20 minutes 06:00-19:00. **Do not look for the bus inside the station and Do Not Take Any Other Bus!!!** Look for the bus in stall #1 or by the large blue sign in English towards the back of the sidewalk which says “No. 78 Damnoen Saduak, FLOATING MARKET.”



Tributes from Meditators Around the World

- **Rianne, Holland:** Extremely valuable; once in a lifetime opportunity! I will take this with me back home and enjoy Buddhism the rest of my life.
- **Pablo, Chile:** Extremely valuable; made me feel one with the world. I feel love, peaceful love for everything and everybody.
- **Lieke, Holland:** This trip has been the best thing I've ever done in my life, and the things I've learned and seen out of meditation are a very important part of it. I want to thank you so much. Never in this life will I forget about this experience, and I will definitely continue meditating at home.
- **Richard, USA:** Extremely valuable; this all too short time, none-the-less did give me an entirely new awareness of an inner world of richness and resourcefulness that wants to be known and welcomed into conscious awareness.
- **Roosmarijn, Holland:** Very valuable; my meditation studies showed me a new world and that I was capable to get there – that was more than I expected.
- **Rachel, Canada:** Extremely valuable. As we say, I “straightened my head out” ...many illusions, veils were lifted and things were sorted out ... I realized a new way to live that I had really known all along.

- **Niels, Holland:** Extremely valuable. It let me put life in a much bigger perspective than I've ever seen it in before. It showed me what's really important in life. And, it definitely encouraged me to live in a more altruistic way. (*Niels's mother was so impressed with his meditation that she also came with her friend, and both meditated to experiencing Nirvana.*)
- **Anke, Germany:** Extremely valuable. In Nirvana I was overwhelmed. I knew I don't have to doubt any more. Whatever I've seen and felt was real. I never meditated before and achieved quite much in such a short time. (*She declared herself a follower of the Buddha.*)
- **Andrew, USA:** I didn't know much about Buddhism and wasn't sure what to expect. I tried to keep an open mind and couldn't have followed a better approach. I was able to purify myself mentally and spiritually. The environment of the wat emanates peace and contentment. The monks were some of the most peaceful, respectful people I have ever met and led by example rather than proselytizing. Phra Bart guided us with patience and a sense of humor. All in all, it's hard to think of a time better spent. I have become a more confident, clear-thinking person. I encourage anyone out there to give the Meditation Institute a try.
- **Steve, Singapore:** Extremely valuable! In Nirvana I saw Lord Buddha. In Heaven I felt very peaceful. In Hell I saw my grandpa. You can really experience things that you cannot see with the eye. It is very peaceful when you are in Nirvana.

- **Judith, Holland:** Very Valuable! In Heaven I saw celestials living on clouds and a mountain and felt peace and lightness. I've made a big step from no experience. Now I know I'm on the right way. I did not ever expect to be able to feel so calm and peaceful and happy while meditating, but also afterwards.
- **Teddi, USA:** Extremely valuable! In Nirvana I felt completely weightless, at peace and stillness. I reached a level of peace and stillness that I never had before. I'm not sure exactly what happened, but it was the most beautiful experience of my life. This is a wonderful program. Everyone was very kind and patient. The food was great! Just keep doing what you are doing!